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**Independent Art Galleries in the Context of Romanian Visual Arts (2000-2019)
- Organization Mechanisms and Aesthetic Features -**

My thesis analyzes the development of the commercial private art gallery as a concept, in the Romanian context, investigating its contribution to the local art scene.

Regarding the framework of visual arts in Romania, the commercial gallery (which is seen today in organizational, relational and aesthetic terms) is a rather "recent" invention, correlated with a stage of "normalization" in Romanian history and with the development of a private sector within the visual arts. Before 1989, the evolution of the local art scene was determined by the communist regime, however the 90's brought a vast development of the private sector in arts given a general tendency to synchronize with international artistic directions and gain some form of recognition from the West. This rather late development of commercial galleries in Romania can be seen as a consequence of the uncertainty specific to the local, "fractured", artistic context that was dealing with a process of reconfiguration throughout the so-called "transition period" that followed the fall of communism. Therefore, it is only after the year 2000 that we can talk about a stable configuration of independent commercial art galleries in Romania, closer to the current understanding of galleries in the contemporary art world.

My study focuses on the development of a new institutional stage in the local art scene, as well as the development of innovative aesthetic paradigms given this contribution of regional independent galleries. Some of the key points I am following include the emergence of a more dynamic local art scene given the configuration and stability of the art market or the influence of an institutional approach in artistic discourse and in the art exhibition space (often following the white cube format). By closely analyzing the aspirations and objectives of Romanian commercial galleries, my research will highlight the way in which a certain artistic system, with all its specific regional features, can contribute to the development of a common perspective that corresponds to the dominant tendencies in the contemporary art world. Since galleries are among the main actors driving artistic capital in the art world, I will also consider their potential of delivering a regional perspective in the larger context of the global ecosystem. This transformation of a regional, Romanian, system towards a global approach will be highlighted in my research in two case studies dedicated to Romanian galleries that had the most impact at an international level: Plan B Gallery (headquarters: Cluj-Napoca and Berlin) and Nicodim Gallery (headquarters: Bucharest and Los Angeles).

In my investigation on the stimulation of the local art scene by independent galleries, an important feature will be to highlight the galleries' capacity of "translating" aesthetic values

into economic ones based on three essential inputs: the public, artistic "education" and the art market. Furthermore, independent galleries may be relevant in relation to the concept of "the new" as proposed by Boris Groys, in the sense that they have the potential to function as "cultural archives". The local commercial galleries' impact on artistic discourse and their potential to integrate Romanian artists in the international art circuit are correlated (in Piotr Piotrowski's terms) with their capacity to deconstruct the standardized Western narratives regarding Romanian art.